



**PARKS & RECREATION BOARD
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
August 10, 2021 6:00 P.M.**

**Southeast Regional Library
775 N Greenfield Rd, Gilbert, Arizona 85234
and Microsoft Teams**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Bob Ferron, Chair
Holly Pritulsky
Scott Williams
Paul Gonzales
Ben Kalkman
Jason Geroux
David Boudinet
Cody Ziemer

STAFF PRESENT:

Robert Carmona, Parks and Recreation Director
John Kennedy, Parks and Recreation Manager
Rocky Brown, Parks and Recreation Business Manager
Marshall MacFarlane, Parks and Facilities Manager
Jennika Horta, Management Analyst

Sarah Sharits, Parks and Recreation Strategist
Denise Merdon, Recreation Supervisor

Dawn Prince, Assistant Town Manager
Amanda Jenkins
Chaveli Herera
Zaina Torres
Bryan Bouk
Trevor Henry
Jake Magruder

PUBLIC:

Jeff Crane

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Rebecca Hill, Vice Chair

COUNCIL LIAISON PRESENT:

Councilmember Aimee Yentes

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Ferron called the meeting to order at 6:02 P.M.

2. **ROLL CALL:** Roll call was taken, and it was determined that a quorum was present.

3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. **COMMUNICATION FROM CITIZENS PRESENT:** Members of the audience may address the Board on any item not on the agenda that is within the jurisdiction of the Parks and Recreation Board. The Board's response is limited to responding to criticism, asking staff to review a matter commented upon, or asking that a matter be put on a future agenda.

There were no communications from citizens at this time.

5. NEW EMPLOYEES:

There are six new employees:

Zaina Torres, Recreation Coordinator I at the McQueen Park Activity Center
Bryan Bouk, Recreation Coordinator II at Freestone Recreation Center
Trevor Henry, Recreation Coordinator I at Cactus Yards
Jake Magruder, Recreation Specialist at Freestone Recreation Center
Misty Smith, Recreation Coordinator I at Aquatics
Laura Young, Recreation Coordinator II with the Administration Team

6. DEPARTMENT OF THE FUTURE:

Robert Carmona, Marshall MacFarlane, John Kennedy, and Rocky Brown shared a PowerPoint presentation. Some Accomplishments shared include:

- Grand Opening of Cactus Yards, Desert Sky Park, Gilbert Regional Park, Public Safety Training Facility and Eleven 41.
- Parks and Facilities COVID Mitigation and LRIP Plan
- Programming, Rentals and Events: COVID-19 Implementation, Freestone Breaks \$1 Mill, NEW Programs & Classes, Eleven41, Virtual Recreation, New Events, Increase in Tournaments, 90% Customer Satisfaction, Increase in Facility Rentals, Ripken On Tour, Improved data collection
- Awards: Fields of Excellence Awards, (4) APRA Awards & (1) APWA Award, USSSA Outstanding Park x2!, USSSA National Finalist and Best in Valley – Cosmo Dog Park
- Accreditation: CAPRA Accreditation

City of the Future focuses on areas of Prosperous Community, Strong Economy and Exceptional Built Environment. The Parks and Recreation is working to enhance to provide more value and keep it exceptional.

Our Mission: Anticipate, Create and Help People. The Parks and Recreation rally around these three areas.

Part One:

The team met in June to discuss these areas to address and what is the guidance.

How does the Department prepare for the future growth?

What does our community need from Parks and Recreation?

How does Parks and Recreation support the Town's goals of becoming the City of the Future?

"Individual commitment to a group effort – that is what makes a teamwork. Vince Lombardi"

Our Divisions Focus Areas & Goals:

Director's Office Focus Areas & Goals

- CAPRA Accreditation – Renews every five years. The Parks Division is working to perform at the highest level and transparency and doing it the right way. Current scoring is at 96% with a goal of 100%.
- NRPA Gold Medal Award – We are working to compete for this in the future to be the Best of the Best.
- Strategic & Master Plans – Parks is very well engaged in all the plans such as the Desert Sky, Shade and Streetscapes, Transportation, etc.
- Budgeting
 - Business Cases
 - Data Governance
- Benchmarking – This is completed every few years with the Peoples Team to make sure we are being competitive with the rest of the Valley.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – Focusing not only as a Town but as a Department to make sure we provide an accessible experience for all, in all the areas.
- Parks Board
- Parks & Recreation Foundation – The Board and Foundation are a major part of what we do and a major part of where we are going in the future because of their guidance and feedback that is going to help set that vision of where we are going.
- Internal Communication

Marketing

- Implementation of the Community Relations Plan – We are focusing on the Community Relations Plan. How are we communicating with the Community, non-profits, and the different groups in Town?
- Global Marketing Requests
- Monitor Social Media
- Targeting Marketing – We are currently working on this with all the Staff to increase and focus on targeted areas.

Parks & Facilities Focus Areas & Goals – Marshall MacFarlane

- Addition of a Parks Manager – This individual will assist with the volume and expansion.
- Computerized Maintenance Management System (CMMS) + Data – This helps gain more control to document and control for more consistency to systemically address more schedule areas to make sure items are not missed and done effectively and help control cost.
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOFs) – There is training for everyone to do a project the same way, videos and written procedures will assist with the consistency.
- Training & Onboarding – The new employees are being trained and we are setting expectations.
- Smart Park Technology – Working on new robot technology for line painting, lawn mowing, smart irrigation to help with staffing and efficiencies.
- Diversity of Open Spaces – We challenged field supervisors to come up with some cool spaces such as theme gardens, to have more diversity for residents and visitors.
- Long Range Infrastructure Plan (LRIP) – We have cataloged all assets and equipment life such as slides, irrigation pumps, to track when items need replaced.

Facilities

- Facilities Transformation – Track and allot space, health, and safety – working with stakeholders, outside stakeholders and the Town to develop a suite of facilities and management services versus taking each situation on a case-by-case basis.
- Sustainability & Technology Initiatives
- Computerized Maintenance Management Systems (CMMS) – This tracks work, assets, labor, cost, and other areas.
- Data-Informed Decisions, KPI's, Benchmarking – Tracking customer surveys, labor rates, equipment life and infinite amount of data.
- Long Range Infrastructure Plan (LRIP) – We have cataloged all the assets to prepare and budget for future to help fund routine items.
- Training Opportunities, Professional Development – We are promoting training opportunities and diversify within the division.

Recreation Focus Areas & Goals – John Kennedy

- Optimize AZCEND Partnership – This is a group that offers our senior programming that includes meals and activities out of the Gilbert Activity Center
- Optimize MCLD Partnership – Maricopa County Library District operates the libraries; the contract was just renewed for five years.
- Recreation Needs Assessment – We are assessing the growth of new parks, look at the whole community and assess the needs.
 - Community Survey
 - Focus Groups
- Adaptive Recreation – Operates out of the Gilbert Community Center, learn what the community needs are, new trends and opportunities.
 - Community Survey
 - Focus Groups
- Virtual Recreation Center – COVID brought about ways to reach the community virtually. We are working on ways to continue in this area.

- LRIP Collaboration – We have cataloged all the assets.

Recreation – Cactus Yards & Freestone Recreation Center

- Utilization of Facilities – We are looking at how best to use the facilities appropriately to meet needs and better define the niches.
- Independent Contractor Process – Reviewing the independent contractors process and coming up with recommendations moving forward.
- Staffing Model Enhancements – Reviewing to confirm all the personal assets are in the right places and make sure all is good synergy and provide customer center service to our constituents.
- Care & Preservation of Assets (LRIP) – Confirming that all assets are cataloged and preserved. Cactus Yards and all the facilities have a lot of assets that need to be preserved in the right way.
- Evaluate Economic Impact – Evaluations to make sure we are utilizing parks to have the best economic impact
- Attract Regional & National Events – Cactus Yards and the Freestone Recreation Center are unique, and we are striving to make sure they are being used in the best possible way and gain opportunities for the best economic impact.

Recreation – SE Regional Library & Riparian Preserve

- Optimize Other Partnerships
 - East Valley Astronomy Club – The volunteers operate the observatory at the Riparian Preserve to communicate regularly with them and to capitalize on what they offer and tie it in with our programming through the Preserve.
 - Desert Rivers Audubon Society – Monthly bird walks are offered and speaker series throughout the year at the library and at the Preserve. We are looking for ways to expand, such as video taping some of the monthly bird walks to promote that in tourism and help with the economic impact.
- Riparian Education Center – This is a Capital improvement project for the future.
- Riparian Preserve Yurts – Planning for the future.
- Utilize Staff to Balance Programming & Ambassadorship of the Preserve – Adding a new position.

Rangers

- Computerized Maintenance Management System (CMMS) Efficiencies
 - Data Analysis – track calls for service, track travel patterns and how they are able to help with programming and rentals. Make sure they are housed in the right location so that we have them able to respond to calls for service.
 - Travel
 - Programming & Rentals
- Relationship with the Police Department

Business Focus Areas & Goals – Rocky Brown

Special Events

- Identify Destination & Signature Events – Identify and attract things to Gilbert.
- Utilize the Regional Lawn & Heritage District
- Continue to Attract Tournament Promoters – Tournaments that came into town - FY19 had 6, FY20 had 14, FY21 had 86. (Could have booked 12 more if we had the room. Due to COVID shutting down other states many of those came to Arizona)
- Community Events in the Neighborhood Parks – We are looking to focus more on events within the communities.
- Proactive Approach to Gain Events & Promoters – This partners with local police department to do events in the community.

Outdoor Recreation

- Pickleball & Volleyball Programming at Regional – We are looking to expand tournaments and programs to generate more revenue.
- Aquatics Enhancements – Adding enhancements and opportunities to do more spring based programs or fall based programming to fill the gaps. We have a goal that we want kids to know how to swim in Gilbert keeping them safe and avoid drownings.
- Rental Coordination with Tournaments & Leagues – We strive to make sure events are coordinated appropriately.

CIP Trails

- Integration with Transportation
- Street Bond – Trails systems and bike trails
- Master Plans –
 - Department
 - Regional & Desert Sky Parks
 - Paseo
 - Shade & Streetscape
 - Represent the Department's Interests

Admin & Partners

- Customer Centric Culture – Striving for the front desk to always look through the eyes of the customer. How are they going through our systems to rent ramada's or rooms, be helpful with bookings and provide the best customer service possible.
- Automated Response & Online Chat Feature – Walk-ins have become less frequent and looking to enhance chat options.
- Technology & Efficiency
- Partner for All Divisions – We will book things and take care of things for all the division.
- Highlight Current Partnerships – HD South, Arizona Ice, Rip City Batting cage and highlight them on our website.
- Establish New Partnerships – Always looking to establish new partnerships.

Part Two:

We will be meeting with our internal staff next week to focus on in an engaging working session.:

What resources do our employees need from Management to be successful now and into the future?

How can we improve our employee engagement and keep our team connected?

What does a department of the future look like to you? (Engage with this Board for suggestions.)

“Coming together is the beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success. Henry Ford”

Next Steps:

Part 2 Discussion

Division Meetings

1:1 meetings

Department of the Future

Comments and Questions:

The Board members shared comments:

- Chair Ferron expressed his satisfaction with the growth in ideas and forward thinking in the department with a solid base of ideas.
- The community engagement part is spot on, getting more people involved in the community and getting their input is very vital.
- Member Scott Williams inquired: With the growth in the staff overall – what is the plan to avoid a top-down control.
Response: Three years ago, Robert, John and Rocky looked to the future that Cactus Yards, Gilbert Regional, PSTF and Desert Sky were going to be coming online. The number one concern was how do we make sure that we keep this unit connected. It has been accomplished because everyone has been on that one team approach of this is Parks and Recreation and this is for Gilbert. We make sure there is constant collaboration and communication between everyone and use everyone's strengths and skill sets for the betterment of the department and the Town. There has been a network of systems to put together people from all areas to brainstorm, problem solve, community and connections. Microsoft Teams has been a tool utilized for better communication.
- Is this happening with all departments or just Parks?
Response: Robert could not comment on the other departments.
- Is there a time frame?
Response: We started in June and it was pushed off to August for part 2. We would like to come back every six weeks for about 5 to 6 more parts to put it together, hopefully later this year we will have the parts together.
- Member Holly Pritulsky inquired: To reduce the duplication of efforts – is there a plan? Is there a five- or ten-year plan?
Response: The master plan 2014-2015 had a variety of suggestions to work on. John and Rocky worked on those sections to implement. We are now at that next level and growth period to move forward. This is the revisiting time and knowing that we are going to need to do a new master plan in the next few years. We are making sure that we are hitting the mark for today's population and tomorrow's population.
- Member Holly Pritulsky inquired: Gilbert Public Schools – what is being done in conjunction with them?
Response: We have IGA's with Gilbert Public Schools (Higley and Chandler) all within the innerworkings of the pool management facility use sharing and things of that nature. Definitely a part of that conversation we can add.
- Member Cody Ziemer inquired: The LRIP is a great idea, did that identify any significant gaps in funding and now going forward is there a plan to fill that gap?
Response: Yes, it identified a significant amount of funding gaps, the Parks Board and the entire team worked on it in conjunction with Public Works and Council. It showed us just within Parks and Facilities we had close to about 800 million dollars in assets. We worked everyone of those assets – looking at maintenance plans, procedures, time frames for those items to be taken care of and the overall cost of replacement. We then looked at those over the next 100 years and itemized those on the map for the coming years what will be due. To get there we are going to invest approximately 9 million per year. Council approved the funding policy in place to start using some of the dollars that have been in various areas to start putting towards both Public Works and Parks and Recreation's LRIP efforts to make sure that we can build up those reserves over time. We can share the presentations that have been prepared.

7. DEPARTMENT UPDATES:

- a. **Administration** – Director Robert Carmona shared the addition of the new Parks Manager open position is posted on the website.
- b. **Parks & Facilities Division** – Marshall MacFarlane shared there was a position for an Assistant Facilities Manager (approximately 130 applicants that is down to the last 4). The team has been working on the move of the meetings during the chamber's construction to other locations and the clean up from storm damages.
- c. **Recreation Division** - John Kennedy shared they are working with the new staff onboarding, training, and getting their creative ideas. Cactus Yards during the week is used for our own programs and rentals, on the weekends they are used for tournaments from local, regional, and national tournament promoters. Each year we open the month of July requests for the following calendar year to find out who is interested in bringing tournaments. For 2022 there are 55 booking periods, all 52 weekends plus 3 break time weeks (spring, Christmas, and fall) there have been 165 requests. On average there are three requests per booking period that we have to determine how to allocate those requests. Only 8 of those 55 weeks have one request, there are 47 weekends we are going to make more people unhappy that they do not get the facility than we get to make happy. It is a challenge and a good problem to have, it shows the demand that is out there and speaks to our front-line staff that has done such a great job of operating that facility since it reopened. Twelve different tournament promoters have submitted request for 2022, that is up from eight in 2021.

Question: The indoor facility - how is the rental for that?
Response: The rentals for that are more for local groups for practices, etc. John can provide the numbers at the next meeting.
- d. **Business Division** – Rocky Brown had no updates until the Executive Session.
- e. **C.A.P.R.A.** – Jennika Horta provided an update that she and Sarah are continuing to have the quarterly meetings with each of their chapter subject matter experts and have made great progress especially in the surveys and data which is Chapter 10. All is going very well.

8. PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD MINUTES

a. June 8, 2021, Regular Meeting

MOTION: Ben Kalkman moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of June 8, 2021 as written, seconded by Scott Williams. **Motion passed 8-0.**

9. REPORT from CHAIR & BOARD MEMBERS:

Chair Ferron commented that he had the opportunity to use the indoor facility at Cactus Yards and it was fantastic – really nice. In the middle of the summer on a Saturday morning he had 55 kids there playing football. We need to market this facility more.

Chair Ferron wanted to commend everyone on the July 4th Celebration at Regional Park. It went over really well, food trucks were busy, music and fireworks were fantastic – Great Job!

10. REPORT FROM COUNCIL LIASION:

Councilmember Yentes had no comments at this time.

11. REPORT FROM STAFF LIASON:

Denise Merdon shared a video of the July 4th event. There were approximately 25,000 attendees (planned for about 12,000). Collaborations took place with the police department, traffic, park staff with no major incidents, just a few minor ones. Overall, it was a great event!

12. RECESS:

MOTION: Ben Kalkman moved to adjourn the Regular meeting at 7:19 P.M. to move to the Executive Session, seconded by Paul Gonzales. **Motion passed 8-0**

13. ADJOURN

MOTION: Ben Kalkman moved to adjourn the Executive Session and the Regular Meeting at 8:35 P.M. seconded by Paul Gonzales. **Motion passed 8-0.**

ATTEST:

Bob Ferron, Chair

Denise Merdon, Staff Liaison